



## THE COUNTY OF KAUAI

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### News Release

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### **Kaua'i police now equipped with medication that reverses opioid overdose**

LĪHU'E – Kaua'i police officers are now equipped and trained to administer a nasal spray medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid-involved overdose.

"The misuse of opioids continues to affect our island and our families," said Kaua'i Police Assistant Chief Roy Asher. "Although the naloxone program does not solve the opioid crisis, our officers are now better prepared when responding to a drug overdose. We are now able to save a life in a way which was not possible through past practice."

The life-saving medication is called naloxone, also known by its brand name Narcan, and it's administered through a nasal spray. Naloxone acts within minutes and works by temporarily displacing opioids from the receptors in the brain to restore normal breathing.

In 2016, Gov. David Ige enacted Act 68 which authorized police, firefighters, lifeguards, all emergency medical technicians, family and friends to administer overdose reversal medications, such as naloxone, to anyone suffering from an opioid-related drug overdose. Act 68 also authorized harm-reduction organizations to store and distribute naloxone to the public.

Through a grant from the state Department of Health awarded to the Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center (previously known as the CHOW Project), the Kaua'i Police Department in 2018 was given 192 Narcan kits, worth nearly \$25,000.

In September 2018, and in March of this year, officers were trained in the use of naloxone by the Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center and Mālama Pono Health Services.



“We are grateful for the laws in place and for our partnering agencies that have provided us with the Narcan kits,” said Assistant Chief Asher. “Being equipped with naloxone not only enables us to protect the public, it is also important for the protection of our officers in the field in the rare but possible event of becoming exposed to a dangerous drug.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), opioids are currently the main driver of drug overdose deaths in the United States. The CDC reported that in 2017, opioids were involved in 47,600 out of 70,237 drug overdose deaths in the U.S. In Hawai'i, the state Department of Health reported that unintentional drug poisonings, or overdoses, are the leading cause of injury-related death in the islands, and an average of five deaths per year occurred on Kaua'i between 2010 and 2014 due to a drug overdose.

For more information on naloxone and overdose prevention, visit Malama Pono Health Services at <https://mphskauai.org/> or contact your health care provider.

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